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ABSTRACT

This document highlights some of the success stories resulting from the activities of the Houston READ Commission (HRC), a nonprofit urban literacy coalition created by the Mayor and City Council of the Greater Houston area. It relates the stories of "those who are the future," lists gifts which support HRC programs, and donors and volunteers on behalf of the Mayor and HRC. It also reports that Houston will coordinate the National Literacy AmeriCorps Program, describes HRC's new World Wide Web site, and tells about its innovative program for dropouts. A list of individual sponsors concludes the document. (NKA)

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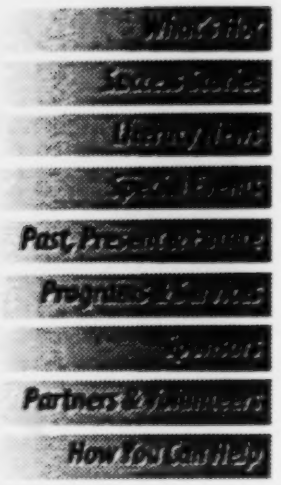

5330 Griggs Road, #75
Houston, Texas 77021

The Houston READ Commission, a nonprofit urban literacy coalition, created by the Mayor and City Council to coordinate adult and family literacy services in the Greater Houston area.

HOUSTON READ COMMISSION SUCCESS STORIES

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Houston READ Commission

Success Stories

Learn more about the triumphs of the Houston READ Commission through our Success Stories section.

- **PEOPLE**
Stories from those who are the future

- **SUPPORT**
Gifts from those who share the vision

AMERICORPS
When a group adopts a motto like "Getting things done," expectations are bound to be high.

CYBERNEWS
With a new site on the World Wide Web and the help of Tenagra Corporation, the Houston READ Commission has enlisted the power of the Internet in its war on illiteracy.

MCNAIR GRANT
In a partnership with the Houston Independent School District, Houston Networks and the Houston Community College System, the Houston READ Commission has initiated an "underground school district" to serve drop-outs or students at risk of dropping out of high school.

1996 CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTORS
Donations from Houston READ Commission patrons who have participated in the 1996 Individual Campaign total just over $30,000.

PROVIDER MEMBERS
A new, three-tiered membership structure for literacy providers and friends of the Houston READ Commission has been adopted, the top level of which is eligible for as much as $10,000 a year in grant awards from the Mayor's Literacy Challenge Fund.

- **HONORS**
Accolades from those who know the work

MAYOR HONORS HRC
At a celebration to recognize friends of literacy at the Houston Club in January Richard J.V. Johnson, chairman and publisher of the Houston Chronicle, made award presentations to donors and volunteers on behalf of the mayor and HRC.

Houston READ Commission
Literacy News

Houston to Coordinate National Literacy AmeriCorps Program

When a group adopts a motto like "Getting things done," expectations are bound to be high.

With the recent announcement by President Clinton's Corporation for National Service that the Houston READ Commission, administrator of the Houston's Literacy* AmeriCorps program, has been tapped as the program's national lead agency, these high expectations are being realized.

Literacy*AmeriCorps is part of Clinton's network of national service programs, which has been described as a "domestic peace corps".

Literacy*AmeriCorps teams have operated in partnership with the National Institute for Literacy and with local literacy providers in the Houston, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, and Seattle metropolitan areas since 1994.

With 30 Literacy*AmeriCorps members serving in 19 partner agencies, Houston's program is the largest of the four and the only one to be recommended for expansion by the Corporation for National Service, Dr. Jeannett Manzanero, Houston Literacy*AmeriCorps coordinator, reported.

The Houston READ Commission will coordinate fiscal and administrative activities for Literacy*AmeriCorps programs in Houston, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, and Seattle. A search for a national project coordinator, who will be advised by a steering committee representing leaders in the national literacy movement as well as the four Literacy* AmeriCorps cities, is under way, Manzanero explained.

"We are particularly excited about the opportunity to serve as the lead Literacy*AmeriCorps agency," Manzanero noted, "because it gives us the chance to show that community-based collaboratives such as the Houston READ Commission can serve as models for literacy service delivery across the country."

The 20,000 members serving in the Literacy* AmeriCorps and the other AmeriCorps programs, receive an annual education award of $4,725 for 1,700 hours of service. In their off hours, AmeriCorps members have the opportunity to take advantage of scholarships from the Houston Community College System for as much as six credit hours a semester.

In Houston, Literacy*AmeriCorps members work full-time at agencies such as the Open Door Mission, a homeless shelter for men that provides substance abuse counseling in addition to literacy training and the Good Neighbor Learning Center, which is located in a

health clinic and provides literacy instruction for families.

Other sites include the Adult Reading Center, ARAMCO Learning Center, Bayland Learning Center, Burbank Middle School, Casa Juan Diego, Casa Maria, Chicano Family Center, Heights Learning Center, Houston Recovery Campus, Latino Learning Center, Literacy Volunteers of Fort Bend County, New Directions Club Inc., Palm Learning Center, Star of Hope Mission, S.T.E.P.S., and Texas House.

Outside the learning centers and shelters, Houston Literacy*AmeriCorps members have marched alongside students in parades celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday and Cinco de Mayo; cooked and served meals to elderly residents of a public nursing home; and participated in service days such as SERVE Houston's "Hands on Houston".

"In 1994-95, Houston corps members gave more than 34,000 hours of service. This year, members have served over 36,000 hours in nine months," she continued. "We thank them for the great job they are doing to support community-based literacy providers."

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Houston READ Commission
Literacy News

War on Illiteracy Extends to Cyberspace

With a new site on the World Wide Web and the help of Tenagra Corporation, the Houston READ Commission has enlisted the power of the Internet in its war on illiteracy.

Those with Internet access may type "http://www. houread.org/" beginning in July.

This preview site will be expanded during September, International Literacy Month.

The web site will include a number of unique features, including a monthly news summary aimed at literacy advocates, as well as video clips and sound bites from individuals who have been helped through the READ Commission's efforts. In addition, the site will showcase exceptional volunteers and share their individual perspectives on helping others learn to read.

Visitors to the site also may learn about the READ Commission's programs and services, volunteer opportunities, upcoming special events, partner agencies, and philanthropic supporters.

"We're so excited about staking our claim in this new frontier," Margaret Doughty, executive director, said. "We hope the web site will reflect our belief in the HRC's work, as well as encourage those who visit it to volunteer and share in our success."

The Houston READ Commission established the site with the help of Tenagra Corporation , a Houston-based company that specializes in providing Internet marketing and public relations services to clients worldwide. Tenagra underwrote the site's development and has committed to underwriting future costs of hosting the web site, Doughty reported.

"The World Wide Web has become an outstanding method for organizations and businesses to build a dialog with their local community," Dr. Cliff Kurtzman, president and chief executive officer of Tenagra, explained. "The Houston community has fueled the extensive growth in our company over the past three years, and we view our support of the READ Commission as a way of giving something back as well as helping to make the HRC web page a place worth stopping on the information highway."

The Houston READ Commission welcomes corporate sponsorships of its web site to fund enhancements to the site and to the HRC's internal computer network architecture. These corporations will receive promotion and hyperlinks on the READ Commission site.

Corporate sponsors of the web site will be invited to an event with city leaders during International Literacy Month.

Organizations interested in sponsorship may contact Hillary FitzHugh, CFRE, development director, at 845-2426.

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Houston READ Commission
Partners & Volunteers

McNair Foundation Grant Funds Innovative Program for Dropouts

In a partnership with the Houston Independent School District, Houston Networks and the Houston Community College System, the Houston READ Commission has initiated an "underground school district" to serve drop-outs or students at risk of dropping out of high school.

The Austin Feeder Pattern Community-based Literacy Service Providers project is funded in part by a $30,000 donation from the Robert and Janice McNair Foundation.

Typically, students must fail in public schools before they are eligible to enroll in community-based or alternative programs. However, nearly 180 H.I.S.D. students from the city's East End - representing Jackson and Edison middle schools and Austin High School -have attained "no-failure transfers" to non-traditional classes in the underground project since January. Instruction, which will be provided year-round, is free of charge to students.

In addition to facilitating these no-failure transfers, the project seeks to provide intensive English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to students who are unable to profit from the regular H.I.S.D. program because of limited English proficiency, and to learner-centered instruction in pursuit of general educational development (GED) certification to dropouts and to those at risk of dropping out. Students must be at least 14 years old to participate in the project.

As one of the project's consortium members, the Houston READ Commission coordinates community outreach and public-awareness efforts; recruitment from school counselors, helpline referrals, and social service agencies; placement of students into appropriate programs; assignment of mentors to students; setting of students' training objectives; referrals to community colleges for further education and job training, and year-round instruction.

Participating providers include AAMA, ARAMCO Learning Center, AVANCE, Bayland Learning Center, Chicano Learning Center, Gulf Coast Community Services, Latino Learning Center, Palm Learning Center, and SER: Jobs for Progress.

Houston READ Commission

Sponsors

Generosity of 1996 Individual Campaign Contributors Makes HRC's Work Possible

Donations from Houston READ Commission patrons who have participated in the 1996 Individual Campaign total just over $30,000. The READ Commission and its coalition of literacy providers are grateful for this support, which plays a part in providing instruction for more than 53,000 adult learners a year.

Governor Mark White and George Strake, Jr. co-chaired the campaign. Campaign steering committee members included Charles W. Duncan, Jr., Wayne E. Glenn, Barbara Hurwitz, Richard J.V. Johnson, John R. Kemp, Elizabeth W. Kidd, Hershel Rich, and Rosie Zamora.

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Eric Andell

Madeleine and Michael Appel

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Houston READ Commission

Partners & Volunteers

Provider Members of READ Commission Receive Mayor's Challenge Grants

A new, three-tiered membership structure for literacy providers and friends of the Houston READ Commission has been adopted, the top level of which is eligible for as much as $10,000 a year in grant awards from the Mayor's Literacy Challenge Fund.

Literacy providers that qualify for 501(c)3 non-profit status and that have offered literacy services for at least two years, may apply once every six months for a $5,000 grant.

Recently, Mayor's Challenge Grants were awarded to: AAMA (Association for the Advancement of Mexican-Americans), $5,000; Adult Reading Center Inc., $5,000; Better Way Youth Inc., $4,820; Chinese Community Center, $5,000; Citywide Outreach Learning Center, [cont'd on page 12] $5,000; Literacy Volunteers of America-Houston Inc., $5,000, and SELF (Self Enhancing Literacy Fund), $5,000.

These agencies also are eligible to receive technical assistance and training from the READ Commission, to participate and vote in provider meetings, to assist in the development of joint proposals, and will receive newsletters. "We are happy to see the ranks of the Houston READ Commission's membership continue to grow," Dr. Frank Jackson, deputy director, said. "The benefits of membership greatly outweigh the minimal cost of formalizing the relationship with the commission." Literacy providers that do not meet the two-year service provision requirement and that may not have been granted 501(c)3 status may apply for "associate memberships." These associate member agencies are entitled to all of the privileges granted to full members except grant eligibility. Members and associate members are asked to pay an annual $25 fee.

Organizations that support the work of the READ Commission, but do not provide literacy services are invited to become "partners." These groups, which pay no annual fees, are entitled to attend monthly provider meetings, to engage in joint proposal development, and to receive the newsletter.

Agencies that are interested in applying for partner, associate member, or member status may contact Jennifer Horton at 845-2419.

Houston READ Commission

Sponsors

Mayor's Office Honors READ Supporters, Presents Proceeds of Literacy Challenge

At a celebration to recognize friends of literacy at the Houston Club in January Richard J.V. Johnson, chairman and publisher of the Houston Chronicle, made award presentations to donors and volunteers on behalf of the mayor and HRC.

Mayor's Assistant Liaison Leonel Castillo presented a $10,000 check to the Houston READ Commission on behalf of the City of Houston. These funds were raised in response to the Mayor's Literacy Challenge.

Reida Jackson of the City Wide Crusades Learning Center was named Volunteer of the Year for her dedication to improving learners' literacy skills.

The following supporters were honored for their generosity to HRC in 1995:

M.D. Anderson Foundation; Anheuser-Busch, Inc.; ARAMCO Services Corporation; Compaq Computer Corporation; Conoco Inc.; ENRON Corporation; Exxon Company, USA; Houston Community College System; Houston Endowment, Inc.; Houston Industries/HL&P; Houston Independent School District; M.W. Kellogg Company; The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation; National Institute for Literacy*AmeriCorps; Hilda and Hershel Rich; Brenda Sanzone; Swalm Foundation; Tenneco Energy; Today's Vision; and Whataburger Inc.

Also recognized for their support of the Houston READ Commission were:

American National Can; Anchor Glass & Container; Carolyn Thompson's Antique Center of Texas; Madeleine G. Appel; BCI Corp.; Browning-Ferris Industries; Harry and Isabel Cameron Foundation; Coca-Cola Foods; Crown, Cork & Seal Company Inc.; English Speaking Union; Executive Women International; First Interstate Foundation of Texas; Good Neighbor Healthcare Center; Greater Houston Women's Foundation; Half Price Books and Records; Crowne Plaza Hotel; Houston Bar Association; Houston Chronicle; The Ralph A. Johnston Foundation; The Junior League of Houston; Mary Lou Keel; Liddell, Sapp, Zivley, Hill & LaBoon, L.L.P.; Marshall Field's; NationsBank; PanEnergy Corp; Randalls Food Markets; Silver Eagle Distributors Inc.; Southwestern Bell Telephone Company; Stewart & Stevenson Services Inc.; Texas Commerce Bank; and Video Monitoring Services.

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